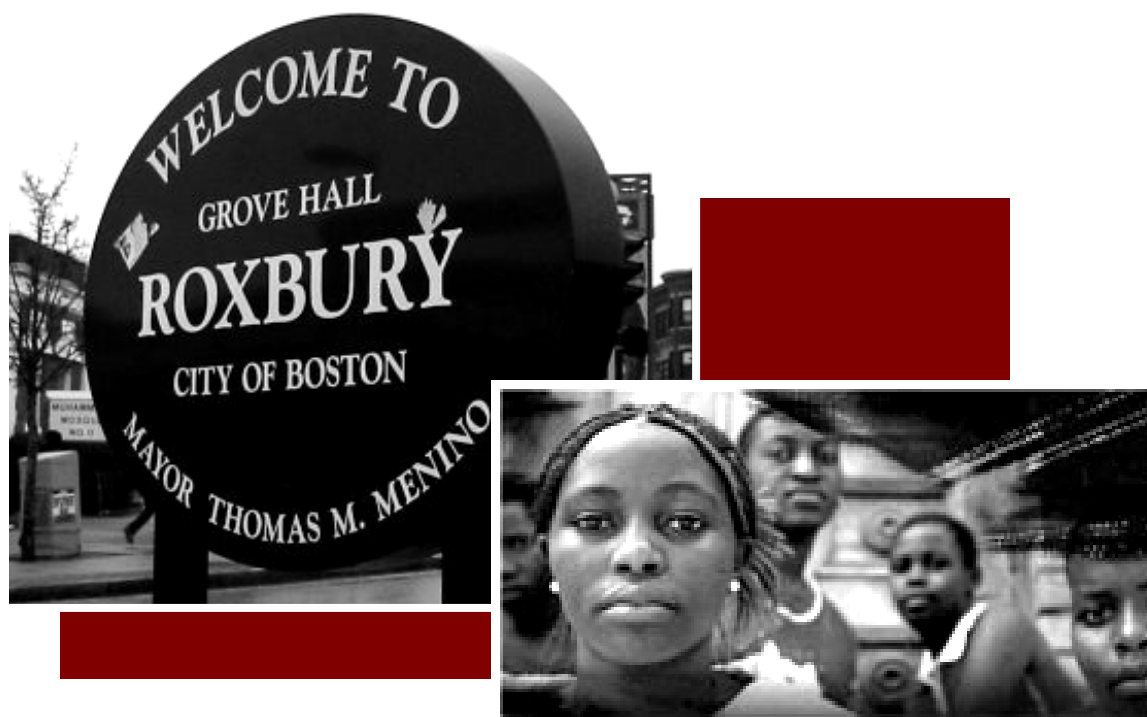


# Connecting the Disconnected: A Survey of Youth and Young Adults in Grove Hall



## A Survey and Report on Out-of-Work and Out-of-School Young Adults Ages 16-24 in Grove Hall

**Commissioned by  
Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino  
and Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner**

**By Project RIGHT, Boston TenPoint Coalition, Health Resources in Action  
and the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center**

**June 2010**



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## Message From Mayor Thomas M. Menino

Dear Reader,

Let me begin by thanking the many partners who contributed to this effort: Project R.I.G.H.T and the Boston Ten Point Coalition, Health Resources in Action, the Boston Private Industry Council, the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center, the Roxbury YMCA, the members of the community steering committee, and Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner, who initially brought this project to me. Most importantly, I extend a thank you and congratulations to the young men and women who conducted the survey, passionate young leaders who reached out to their peers on such a critical



the  
issue.

The report that follows summarizes the results of a survey of disconnected young adults in Grove Hall, commissioned jointly by my office and that of Councilor Turner in the summer of 2009. The information in this report, troubling at times, reminds us of the barriers to success faced by too many of our youth: poverty, violence, a lack of adult support in their lives, criminal records, teen pregnancy, and limited access to educational and employment opportunities. We know this to be the reality for too many families in American cities and here in Boston. This report reinforces a sense of urgency, and tells this powerful story in the words of our city's youth – not just through statistics.

The young people of Boston are smart, talented, and they want to be successful. For the young men and women who were interviewed for this survey, the struggles of poverty have prevented them from accessing the kinds of opportunities that will open doors to successful careers and positive lives. The results of this survey underscore the vital importance of continuing to invest in our youth, supporting what we know works: sustained positive relationships with caring adults, focused educational support, local job training and employment.

The Grove Hall Young Adult Survey demonstrates the power of engaging youth to identify the issues facing their peers and challenging them to take part in understanding and responding to these problems. I urge us all to recommit to understanding the issues facing youth throughout the City of Boston and I ask you to think about how your business, your family, your program, and you can make a difference in the lives of Boston's disconnected youth.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas M. Menino". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mayor Thomas M. Menino  
City of Boston

# Message From Youth Worker Ra'Shaun Nalls

As a youth worker, it is a beautiful moment when you have the pleasure of seeing work come to fruition, when a young person begins to accomplish his or her Success can have a very different look and feel, depending on the youth, and the experiences at hand. Success may be graduating from high school and getting accepted into a four-year college. It can mean conquering a fear of public speaking by testifying at a hearing at City Hall for youth jobs. Or, for a disconnected young adult, someone that has a little or no connection to positive outside of their family, who may have dropped out of school at age 16 and is now unemployed, someone who spends most of their time in the streets, the goals get a GED, a job, and on a path toward college and a career. The road toward in this case may be difficult and long – but equally as important and potentially changing.



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The most significant aspect of my job as a youth worker is developing trusting relationships, especially with young people. The key part of any meaningful relationship is trust. You know you've begun to earn it when a young person begins to see the benefits of a relationship with you – when you become a confidant, or a safe alternative to hang besides the street. They begin to reach out to you, start calling you for guidance, and introduce you to their peers. For a young adult who has had their share of struggles, success may be enrolling in some GED classes for the first time, or securing and attending a job interview.

Building relationships with youth who have been given little reason to trust adults takes time. I have reached out to youth repeatedly for 2 to 3 years before they begin to respond, follow-up, and get engaged in positive activities. For an organization that seeks to serve the hardest-to-reach young people, it can be challenging to measure and celebrate progress in a short period of time – when just building trust can take years.

The job of a youth worker is similar to a farmer. We plant seeds of hope and optimism (outreach), we offer water and sunlight (opportunities), we cultivate the land (support) and then we wait. Our job is to guide and reinforce young people, and to stand by them until they are ready to reap the benefits of their work and motivation – achieving their goals. It is often a lengthy process with many missteps, but the support must be consistent. The true triumph of youth development is not about the worker, but about the young person developing into a responsible adult.

We should not give up on this population, and by no means should we consider these youth without hope. The resiliency our young people display when consistently faced with some of the most difficult life situations speaks volumes of their potential, as well as the need to renew and reinvest in the systems that have failed them. Their courage inspires me and my colleagues every day, and we hope their stories will inspire and move you to action, as well.

Sincerely,

Ra'Shaun Nalls  
Grove Hall Youth Worker Alliance Coordinator  
Project R.I.G.H.T.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The Origins of the Survey

In early 2009, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, working with City Councilor Chuck Turner, formed a committee of community leaders to assess the needs and experiences of “disconnected” (out of work and out of school) young adults in Grove Hall. The objective was to reach young adults who are disengaged and isolated, to gain a better understanding of the challenges they face and to inform a better system to increase access to community resources, finishing school, and finding employment. The method for assessment was a neighborhood survey targeting 16-24 year-olds.

Project R.I.G.H.T. (Rebuild and Improve Grove Hall Together) and the Boston Ten Point Coalition were selected and awarded a grant to implement the project, in partnership with Health Resources in Action and the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center at the Harvard School of Public Health. The survey instrument was developed by representatives from these four agencies, the Office of Human Services, and Grove Hall youth, with input from other members of the steering committee<sup>1</sup>. Topics covered by the survey included education, court involvement, participation in community activities, employment, adult support, and violence exposure.

Because youth, particularly disconnected youth, are often difficult to reach using conventional survey methods, such as telephone, online, or mail-in, youth workers administered the survey peer-to-peer, bringing the survey to youth on the streets, at local parks, and at organized community events. Ten youth living in Grove Hall were hired by Project RIGHT and the Boston Ten Point Coalition, and trained by Health Resources in Action to administer the survey. The survey was administered to 1,050 youth between July and September of 2009.

Once survey administration was complete, data were sent to the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center (HYVPC) for analysis. This report summarizes key findings from the survey. In addition to tabular data, each section of the report highlights youth voices – commentary from Grove Hall youth on the implications of the data for their lives and community.

## The Findings

The picture that these data paint of the lives of disconnected Grove Hall youth is complex. **It is important to note that while these 1,050 young people represent the experiences of many in community, the survey was specifically targeted at youth who disproportionately disconnected, as young adults who are out-work, out-of-school, or both.**

Many of the young adults surveyed in Grove Hall are profoundly disconnected: 52% of these 16-24 year olds had dropped out of school, more than two thirds were unemployed, and 43% were unemployed and not enrolled in school. Job prospects for many were likely to be complicated due to C.O.R.I. (Criminal Offender Record Information) related issues; 71% of males and 38% of females reported that they were currently on probation. Only 9% the 637 respondents unemployed at the time of the survey knew anyone who might be in a position to employ them.

*“Dropping out can happen for many reasons. For example, maybe the youth had a child and had no way to support his or her family because it’s hard to find a part time job. There are a lot of court-involved youth that go away to DYS or a correctional facility and don’t have the chance to finish school. The streets could swallow them in and they have no clue how to find a way out.”*

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A key difference between young adults who were disconnected and their more connected peers was whether or not they had adult support when they were children or had such support now. Those who reported having adult support when they were younger – 39% of the sample – were doing better than those who grew up without it: they were more

<sup>1</sup> For full list of partners, see acknowledgements at the conclusion of this report.

likely to have finished high school, less likely to have a history of court involvement, and more likely to have been employed in the past two years than those who reported not having adult support.

The challenges faced by disconnected Grove Hall young adults are amplified by the burden of violence borne – and too often imposed – by these youth. Nearly three-quarters of survey respondents (72%) reported witnessing some type of gun violence during the previous 12 months, and virtually everyone in the sample had a family member or friend who had been murdered. Violence perpetration was also startlingly prevalent; reporting on the past thirty days, more than one out of four respondents reported attacking or threatening someone with a gun, and well over half (55%) reported being in a physical fight with someone outside of their family.

## Observations

Comprehensive recommendations regarding how to improve the lives of youth in Grove Hall, and by extension, how to improve the overall civic life of the community, are beyond the scope of this report. However, members of the steering committee, including four formerly disconnected young men who worked on the project, had three major observations at the conclusion of the project:

- Disconnected young adults are, as demonstrated by the Grove Hall survey project youth leaders, able to engage constructively with peers who are facing similar challenges. Youth like those who collaborated in the design, administration, analysis and presentation of the Grove Hall survey may be especially well suited to work with other disconnected youth to begin the process of re-engagement with community institutions, activities, and educational resources.
- There is a need for programs that engage youth in the community by providing ongoing mentorship, job opportunities, educational support and community-based activities that are safe and of interest to both younger and older youth. Activities tailored to disconnected or higher-risk young people must be made available and staffed by qualified and caring adults. In addition to adult support, youth initiatives should emphasize positive youth behaviors and the avoidance and danger of criminal activity. Unemployed young adults experience difficulty affording family and social activities. Community partners should allocate time and space for these young adults and plan and/or implement activities that will present them with safe, creative, and healthy options, including job training to help them secure employment, ideally in the Grove Hall area.
- Although the effect of trauma on youth was not the focus of this survey, there is evidence that Grove Hall young adults are disproportionately impacted by high levels of violence. Mental health services have not been adequately and consistently afforded to the community – particularly beyond an initial response to violent crime. Programs that foster resiliency and positive adult relationships, especially for middle-school aged youth, would help to break the cycle of violence.

# INTRODUCTION

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## Background on Grove Hall

With a rich history dating back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Grove Hall is home to almost 17,000 Bostonians, 73% black and 20% Hispanic, and approximately 15% of whom are youth aged 15-24. Grove Hall straddles the Boston neighborhoods of Roxbury and North Dorchester, and sits on the City's troubled Blue Hill Avenue corridor. The neighborhood has, in the words of a recent report "over its history changed from an untamed wilderness to a thriving business district, ...then back to a new wilderness of sorts," and over recent years, "back again to a thriving business and residential district."<sup>2</sup> The neighborhood's resilience is due, in no small part, to a longstanding tradition of collaborative problem solving, present now in community renovation projects and community investments such as the Grove Hall Mecca, the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School, and the recently renovated Jeremiah E. Burke High School, including its newly built public library and community center.

Despite many recent positive developments, Grove Hall, like many low-income communities in Boston, struggles with high rates of poverty, poor transportation services, and low overall employment. Perhaps most distressing, Grove Hall has suffered from high rates of crime and violence for the better part of the last 30 years. The disproportionate presence of violence in Grove Hall has secondary effects on how people live their lives; young people are doubly affected as they also are disproportionately the victims and actors in these violent crimes.

Responding to the needs of the neighborhood, Grove Hall is home to many youth and social service agencies that serve the children, youth and families, and provide a sense of hope to those who are struggling. A strong collection of faith-based organizations and churches, mosques, and synagogues provide assistance and are willing partners of residents and businesses in the community. Through Boston Centers for Youth & Families and the Boston Ten Point Coalition, streetworkers reach out to youth and young adults, connecting them to services and helping them to mitigate conflicts. Law enforcement participation includes foot patrols, bike patrols, crime watches, and interagency crime prevention and intervention initiatives. Families, community residents and youth play vital roles in community initiatives and are leaders in efforts to address issues in the neighborhood.

Community members are aware, however, that there is a gap in services for out-of-school and unemployed young adults. They have observed that these youth, in addition to being disproportionately impacted by current C.O.R.I. laws, are less likely than their connected peers to access alternative adult education programs, employment services, and opportunities to explore social, recreational and educational interests, often because these programs have been designed for younger youth.



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<sup>2</sup> Youth Violence Systems Project, Neighborhood Briefing Document: Grove Hall, 2009. [www.gettingtotheroots.org/nbds](http://www.gettingtotheroots.org/nbds)



## About The Survey: Methodology

### Survey Design

Many youth workers maintain the strong belief and principle that youth should be included in the design and implementation of any youth-serving initiative or program. With this as a guiding rule, the lead agencies followed a community-based participatory research model that put young people at the center of the process. Health Resources in Action (HRIA) was subcontracted by Project RIGHT and the Boston Ten Point Coalition to, among other things, facilitate four focus groups comprised of youth identified as disconnected and/or knowledgeable about disconnected youth, and incorporate focus group findings into survey development.

Approximately 200 questions were presented to the focus groups to assist with the development of the survey. The focus groups enabled the survey developers to gain a better understanding of the following:

- The willingness of young people to answer selected questions;
- Potential interpretations of questions and likeliness that responses would achieve survey goals;
- The number of questions young adults would be willing to answer if they were approached on the street; and
- Any questions youth would want to add to the survey to better convey their wants, needs, and voice.

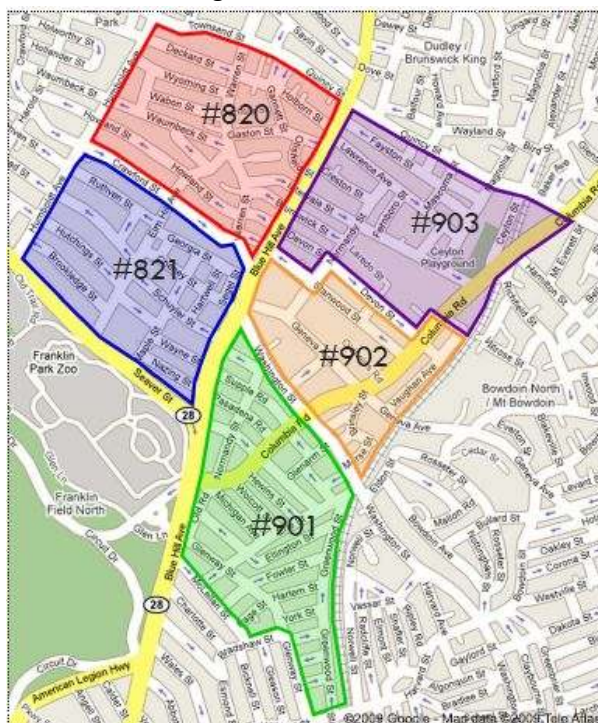
The result was a 37 question survey – one page, double sided – that was administered with the initial goal of reaching 600 at-risk Grove Hall youth. **By the conclusion of the survey process, over 1,000 disconnected young adults had completed the survey.**

### Survey Administration

Project R.I.G.H.T. (PRI) and the Boston Ten Point Coalition utilized their existing relationships and experience in providing services to Grove Hall youth to hire ten young adults (ages 18-24; many of whom were disconnected upon hiring) to become the survey administrators. The logic behind this decision was three-fold: to provide employment opportunities to a number of disconnected community youth, to utilize the knowledge and strengths of the selected youth to easily identify the target population, and to be in a better position to interpret the survey data results.

The ten young adults attended a two-day training by HRIA on survey administration techniques and a one-day training on how to conduct and facilitate focus groups. Additionally, youth were trained on proper data entry methods; throughout the survey process they entered all the survey results into an online survey and questionnaire program. At the conclusion of the summer, members of the survey team facilitated two post-survey youth focus groups to assess the validity of the gathered answers.

Figure 1: Grove Hall<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Image of Grove Hall by Census tract: courtesy of Youth Violence Systems Project. Areas south/east of Columbia Road were not considered part of Grove Hall as defined by the community, and were thus not sampled for this survey.



## Survey Sampling

The sampling universe for the survey was “Grove Hall,” defined specifically as delineated in Figure 1 (previous page). The ten survey administrators (7 male, 3 female) identified young adults thought to be either out-of-work, out-of-school, or both (“disconnected”) throughout the Grove Hall area. Survey administration took place in the summer of 2009 on different days of the week and at different times, including weekends and in the evening. While the sample is not random, survey administrators sought to include a wide variety of their peers, and actively sought out those who had few or no ties to community institutions. While difficult to quantify, it was the strong impression of both the administrators and the steering committee that many of the youth who agreed to participate in the survey would not have otherwise, had the survey administrators been adults, even trusted adults from within the Grove Hall community.

The sampling was limited to young adults ages 16-24 who either lived in Grove Hall (currently or formerly) or identified themselves as spending time there on a regular basis. Youth who reported that they lived or spent significant time south of the Columbia Road boundary in Census tracts 901, 902, and 903 did not self-identify as “from Grove Hall” and thus were not included in the survey sample. Of 1,050 collected surveys, forty were eliminated from the sample because it was unclear whether they met these criteria, resulting in a final sample size of 1,010. Over two-thirds of respondents completed the survey by hand themselves, while the remaining one-third were interviewed by a survey administrator, who filled in their responses on their behalf.

## Data Analysis and Reporting

This report was drafted by the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center and Project R.I.G.H.T., with input from Health Resources in Action and Boston TenPoint, as well as four of the survey administrators: Master Adams, Kelvin McMillan, Kevin Thomas, and Martin Booth. Most sections of this report begin with a table showing data by sex, age, race, whether the respondent is a parent, and whether or not the respondent was unemployed and unenrolled in school at the time of survey administration. When reading these tables, keep the following information in mind:

- The denominator for the percentages shown is always sex, age, race, or parenthood. For example, looking at the education table, 47% of males dropped out of school, as did 40% of black respondents.
- Differences that are statistically significant (very unlikely to have occurred by chance alone) are denoted with an asterisk. When a table contains results that differ significantly by race, the comparison group (or the “referent”) is black youth.
- Except for the table on education, the columns shown are NOT mutually exclusive.

## Description of Survey Sample

The following three tables provide a demographic breakdown of survey respondents overall (Table 1), those with children (Table 2), and those “disconnected” (unemployed at the time of survey administration, and not in school [or dropped out] during the previous school year) (Table 3). Table 2 reveals that more than half of respondents older than 21 had at least one child, and that females with children were more likely than males with children to have childcare (34% vs. 10%).

**Table 1: Demographics of the Survey Sample**

	N	%
TOTAL	1010	100
Grove Hall resident	981	97
Non-resident regular visitor	29	3
Male	661	65
Female	340	34
16-17	294	29
18-20	412	40
21-22	182	18
23-24	131	13
Black/African-American, non-hispanic	731	72
Latino, non-white	165	16
Other/multi	65	6
Missing	49	5
Lived with at least one current household member a year ago	762	75
Did not live w/at least one	128	13
Missing	120	12
Has at least one child	281	28
No children	683	68
Missing	46	5
Disconnected (out of work and out of school)	432	43
Employed and/or in school	488	48
Missing	90	9

**Table 2: Demographics of Respondents with Children**

	% have kids	% of those with kids who have childcare
16-17	10	19
18-20	27	16
21-22	46	22
23-24	54	22
Black/African-American, non-hispanic	28	16
Latino non-white	36	27
Other/multiracial	31	29
Male	29	10*
Female	30	34
Out-of-work and out-of-school	38	12*
Employed and/or in school	22	33

\*indicates statistically significant difference

**Table 3: Demographics of “Disconnected” Respondents+**

16-17	28%
18-20	51%
21-22	64%
23-24	55%
Black/African-American, non-hispanic	48%
Latino non-white	45%
Other/multiracial	54%
Male	54%*
Female	33%
Has at least one child	60%*
No children	41%

\*indicates statistically significant difference

+unemployed at the time of survey administration, and not in school [or dropped out] during the previous school year

# EDUCATION

**Table 4: Education Background**

	% Dropped out	% GED	% In high school	% HS diploma
<b>Total+</b>	38	13	24	22
<b>Male</b>	46*	14	19*	20*
<b>Female</b>	23	11	36	26
<b>16-20</b>	37	9*	34*	16*
<b>21-24</b>	40	23	1	34
<b>Black</b>	40	13	23	22
<b>Latino</b>	37	14	25	20
<b>Other/multi</b>	39	18	24	18
<b>At least 1 child</b>	45*	19*	6*	27
<b>No children</b>	34	11	32	20
<b>Out-of-work and out-of-school</b>	68*	17*	0*	15*
<b>Employed and/or in school</b>	15	10	48	27

\*Statistically significant difference. See 'Data Analysis and Reporting' in the Introduction for help understanding this table.

+This is the only table in the report where the four categories shown are mutually exclusive. However, this row does not total 100% because 3% of respondents were in school the previous year, but it is unknown whether this was high school or college. When a binary 'education' variable was constructed for the rest of the analyses in this report, these 23 youth were combined with those in high school or with a high school diploma, while those with a GED were combined with those who dropped out of high school.

Table 4 shows that more than half (51%) of youth surveyed had dropped out of high school (38% who did not get a GED, plus 13% who did).<sup>4</sup> Males were more likely than females to have dropped out (46% vs. 23%). Those with children of their own were more likely than those without children to have dropped out (45% vs. 34%) or obtained a GED (19% vs. 11%), instead of staying in high school (6% vs. 32%). Sixty-eight percent of those out of work and school had dropped out of high school and not resumed education, while 17% had a GED and 15% did graduate high school. Nearly half (48%) of those employed and/or in school were in school during the previous year, while 27% had graduated high school and the remaining 25% had dropped out or earned a GED.

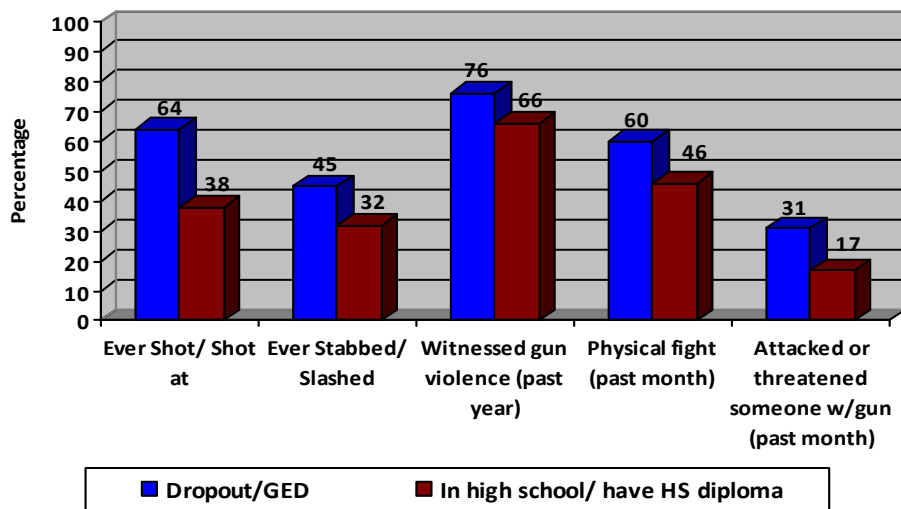
In addition to the findings in Table 4, the survey yielded other important findings about youth and education. One in four 16-year-olds either were not in school during the previous year or had dropped out; this number rose to 48% of 17-year olds and over half (53%) of 18-year-olds. **Dropouts were more likely than those still in high school or with a high school diploma to have a history of court involvement (85% vs. 55%), or be approached by the police at least once a**

<sup>4</sup> The variable "dropout" was created using two questions from the survey: in school during the previous year and highest level of education completed. Anyone who completed high school or at least one year of college was categorized as NOT a dropout, regardless of whether they were in school the past year. This means it is possible someone dropped out of high school, got a GED, then completed some college and thus was not categorized as a dropout. Anyone who said the highest level completed was a GED WAS categorized as a dropout, regardless of whether they were in school the past year. Anyone who said the highest level completed was 11<sup>th</sup> grade or less but WAS in school during the previous year was categorized as NOT a dropout. Anyone who said the highest level completed was 11<sup>th</sup> grade or less but was NOT in school the past year, or said they were but dropped out, was categorized as a dropout. If the highest level completed was 11<sup>th</sup> grade or less and data on whether they were in school the previous year is missing, the respondent was treated as missing data for the dropout variable, except for 5 16-year-olds who said the highest grade completed was 10<sup>th</sup> grade. If the highest level of education completed is unknown (19% of the sample), but they were in school the previous year, they were considered not a dropout. If they were not in school the prior year or dropped out AND were under 18, they were considered a dropout. If they were over 18 and not in school the prior year, dropout status is unknown, as they may have graduated high school at age 17. If they were over 18 and said they dropped out the prior year, they could have dropped out of high school or college, so dropout status is still unknown. Dropout status is unknown for 13% (N=133) of the survey sample.

week (58% vs. 36%), and less likely to have been employed during any part of the previous two years (56% vs. 77%). Dropouts were also less likely to: have someone helping them with their problems/needs/goals currently (26% vs. 46%) or when they were younger (30% vs. 52%), have the emotional support of an adult (67% vs. 87%), know people who motivate them to learn or try new things (32% vs. 60%), or participate in some activity in Grove Hall (36% vs. 55%).

Dropouts were far more likely than those still in school or with a diploma to be victimized by, witness, or perpetrate violence (Figure 2).

### Education and Violence



While GED holders are grouped with dropouts throughout this report, the benefit to dropouts of obtaining a GED was clear from our results. One-quarter of high school dropouts surveyed had completed a GED. When dropouts who had obtained a GED were compared to those who did not get a GED, both groups had similar outcomes with the major exception of employment. **Those with a GED were significantly more likely than dropouts with no GED to have a job at the time of the survey (33% vs. 21%), as well as to have had a job one year prior (37% vs. 27%).** GED-holders were less likely than dropouts with no GED to: be court-involved (76% vs. 87%), have ever been shot or shot at (55% vs. 67%), or witness gun violence in the past year (70% vs. 79%). They were more likely than those without a GED to have received help with their problems/needs/goals when they were younger (37% vs. 27%).

*“Dropping out can happen for many reasons. For example, maybe the youth had a child and had no way to support his or her family because it’s hard to find a part time job. There are a lot of court-involved youth that go away to DYS or a correctional facility and don’t have the chance to finish school. The streets could swallow them in and they have no clue how to find a way out.”*

# EMPLOYMENT

**Table 5: Employment Status**

	% Currently unemployed	% Unemployed one year ago	% Unemployed for two years	% No access to legit employment
<b>Total</b>	66	62	33	87
<b>Male</b>	70*	67*	36*	89*
<b>Female</b>	59	53	25	82
<b>16-20</b>	66	63	36*	87
<b>21-24</b>	67	60	26	86
<b>Black</b>	66	63	33	86
<b>Latino</b>	70	63	35	90
<b>Other/multi</b>	69	56	33	89
<b>At least 1 child</b>	72*	64	33	86
<b>No children</b>	64	62	32	89
<b>Out-of-work and out-of-school</b>	100*	82*	53*	95*
<b>Employed and/or in school</b>	33	44	18	79

\*Indicates statistically significant difference. See 'Data Analysis and Report' in the Introduction for help understanding this table.

Only 34% of respondents were employed at the time of the survey (Table 5). Another one-third of the sample had been unemployed for over two years. Males were more likely than females to be unemployed (70% vs. 59%) and less likely to have access to legit employment (11% vs. 18%).

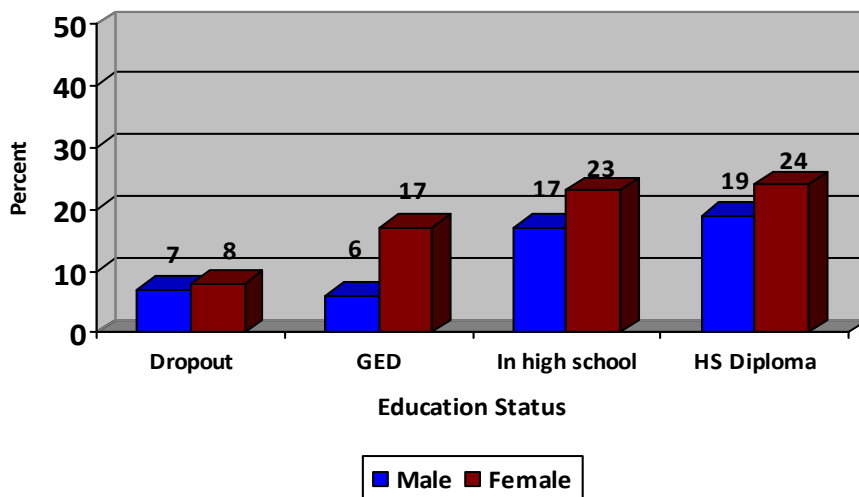
Additional questions about employment revealed that only five percent of youth worked for an employer in Grove Hall during the past year. Of the 66% of youth who were unemployed, only 9% said they knew someone who could hire them, and only 12% said someone was helping them find a job. **Youth unemployed at the time of the survey were more likely than employed youth to have: dropped out of high school (59% vs. 34%), perpetrated violence in the past month (63% vs. 47%), witnessed gun violence in the past year (77% vs. 68%), and been stabbed and/or shot at (71% vs. 60%).** They were less likely than their employed counterparts to: receive emotional support from an adult (68% vs. 87%), have help with their problems, needs and goals (27% vs. 47%), and have had help with their problems/needs/goals in their early teens (30% vs. 59%).

When asked "Do you have access to legit employment that will give you the lifestyle you want?" less than one-fifth (13%) of respondents answered "yes." Those who said "yes" were more likely than those who said "no" to: be female (45% vs. 31%), be employed at the time (69% vs. 29%), be employed in the past two years (88% vs. 64%), know someone trying to help them with their problems, needs



and goals (62% vs. 30%), and receive emotional support from an adult (84% vs. 73%). There was a linear relationship between higher education status and perceived access to legitimate employment, as shown in Figure 3:

**Figure 3: Perceived Access to Legitimate Employment**



Nearly half (47%) of respondents were unemployed and not enrolled in school the prior year. Outcomes for these youth in comparison to youth employed and/or enrolled in school during the prior year were similar to those for unemployed versus employed youth, although youth not in school in addition to being unemployed were approximately 5% worse off across most domains than unemployed youth who were in school during the prior year.

*“Age, gender, and race play a big part in the employment world. Some employers act like age, gender, and race don’t matter when it comes to the youth getting hired. In reality most employers are either sexist, racist, or just don’t like the youth.*

*Without a job youth may see the streets as a way of earning income, whether it’s selling drugs, prostitution, or any other illegal way of getting money.’*



# INVOLVEMENT WITH POLICE/LEGAL SYSTEM

**Table 6: Legal System History**

	% Involved with any court	% DYS	% House of corrections	% Probation
<b>Total</b>	66	43	34	60
<b>Male</b>	76*	53*	43*	71*
<b>Female</b>	45	24	15	38
<b>16-20</b>	62*	42	26*	56*
<b>21-24</b>	72	45	50	68
<b>Black (ref)+</b>	68	45	36	62
<b>Latino</b>	59*	38	26*	54*
<b>Other/multi</b>	59	45	36	54
<b>At least 1 child</b>	72*	53*	51*	71*
<b>No children</b>	62	38	26	55
<b>Out-of-work and out-of-school</b>	78*	57*	47*	70*
<b>Employed and/or in school</b>	53	29	19	49

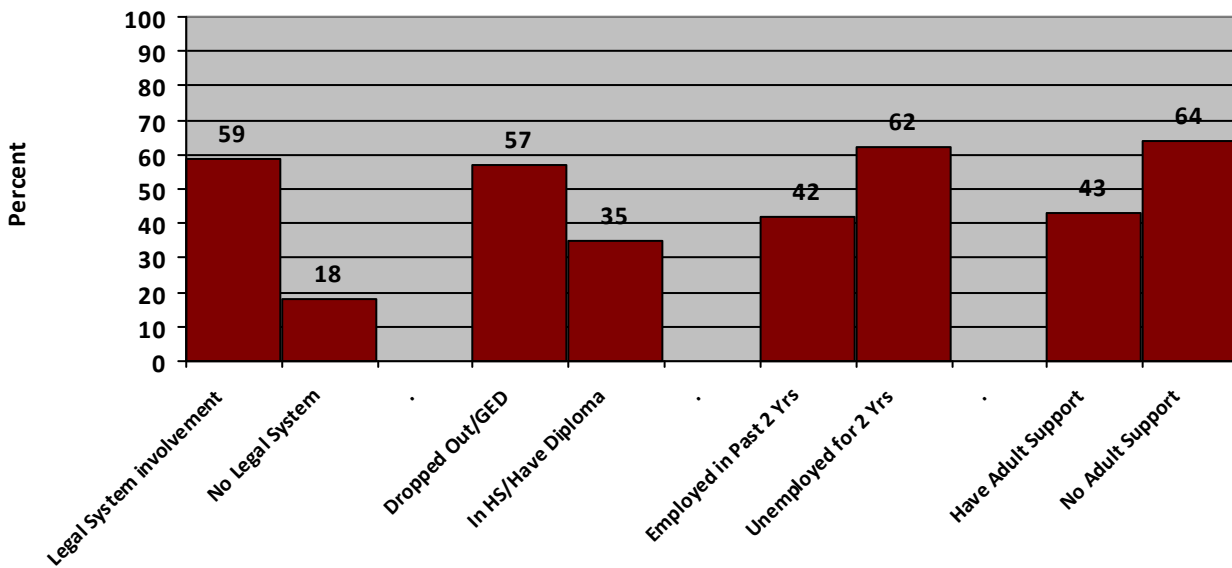
\*Indicates statistically significant difference. See 'Data Analysis' in the Introduction for help understanding this table.

+ "Ref" stands for "referent", which means that any asterisks by a number for Latino or other/multiracial youth indicate a statistically significant difference between that group and black/African-American youth in the survey sample. For example, significantly fewer Latino youth in the sample were court-involved (59%) in comparison to black youth (68%). Since there are fewer other/multiracial youth in the sample, there is NOT a significant difference in terms of court involvement between these youth and black youth, even though the percent of other/multiracial youth in the sample who were court involved was the same as the percentage of Latinos in the sample who were court involved.

**Seventy-two percent (72%) of respondents were currently or formerly involved with the legal system via court (juvenile, criminal, or other), DYS, corrections, or probation.** Table 5 shows that those involved in the legal system in some way were more likely than those who were not to: be male, have children, and be out of work and school. They were also more likely to: know someone who was killed in the past three years (97% vs. 90%), have been shot or shot at (64% vs. 25%), have been in a physical fight in the previous month (62% vs. 35%), and to have attacked or threatened someone with a gun in the previous month (31% vs. 9%).

When asked how often they are approached by the police, nearly one in five (19%) said "multiple times per day." An additional 29% said "once or twice a week," 19% said "once a month," 18% said "a few times a year," and only 16% said "never." Figure 4 provides additional information about the 47% (59% males and 23% females) who said they are approached by the police at least once a week:

Figure 4: Who is Approached by the Police?



*“Males get approached by the police 36% more than females. People or the families of these youth are the cause in some cases. Just living with certain people can trigger the police to watch youth. With jobs not hiring the youth, hanging on the streets with friends gets them looked at as well.”*

# VIOLENCE AND SAFETY

Violence exposure and perpetration among these youth were high, among males, those with children of their own, and disconnected (Table 7). Two-thirds had been stabbed, slashed, shot at or shot in lifetime; in fact, a higher percentage of youth reported being shot their lifetime than reported ever being stabbed or slashed (53% vs. in 5 (59%) perpetrated some form of violence in the previous 30 half (55%) got into a physical fight with someone outside their over one-quarter (27%) attacked or threatened someone with a



particularly respondents their or shot at in 41%). Three days: over family, and gun.

**Table 7: Violence Exposure and Perpetration**

	% Witnessed gun violence (past year)	% Ever shot at or stabbed/slashed	% Know someone killed in past 3 years	% Perpetrated violence (past month)
<b>Total</b>	73	66	95	59
<b>Male</b>	75*	76*	96*	62*
<b>Female</b>	69	46	93	52
<b>16-20</b>	74	63*	95	59
<b>21-24</b>	72	72	96	57
<b>Black (ref)+</b>	74	69	96	59
<b>Latino</b>	71	57*	95	59
<b>Other/multi</b>	69	58*	88*	56
<b>At least 1 child</b>	79*	75*	98*	63*
<b>No children</b>	72	63	94	56
<b>Out-of-work and out-of-school</b>	82*	78*	97*	67*
<b>Employed and/or in school</b>	68	58	93	49

\*Indicates statistically significant difference. See 'Data Analysis' in the Introduction for help understanding this table.

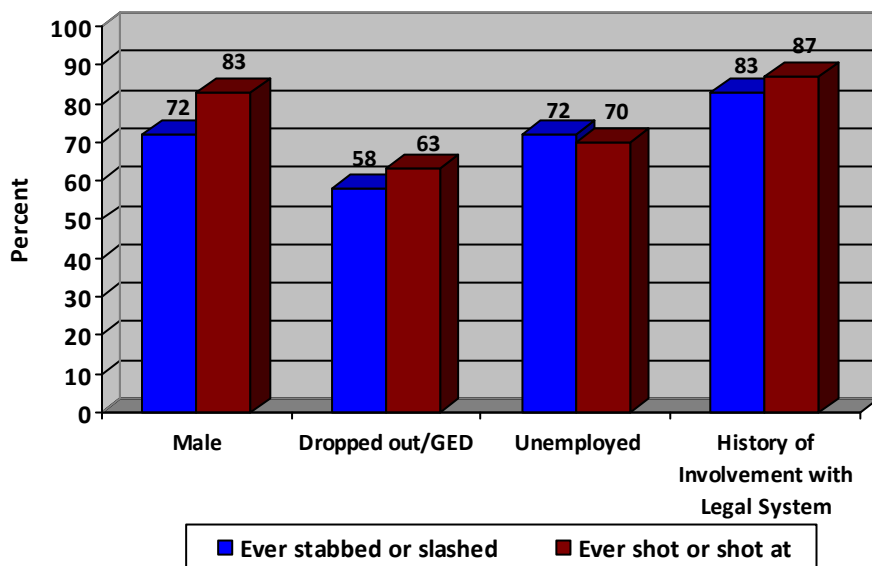
+ "Ref" stands for "referent", which means that any asterisks by a number for Latino or other/multiracial youth indicate a statistically significant difference between that group and black/African-American youth in the survey sample.

## Violence Victimization

Two in five (41%) respondents reported being stabbed or slashed in their lifetime, and over half (53%) reported being shot or shot at in their lifetime. Those who were stabbed or slashed were also more likely to have ever been shot or

shot at (69% vs. 42%). These respondents were more likely than those who had never been stabbed, slashed, shot, or shot at to be male, dropouts, unemployed, and involved (currently or formerly) with the legal system (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Violence Victimization**



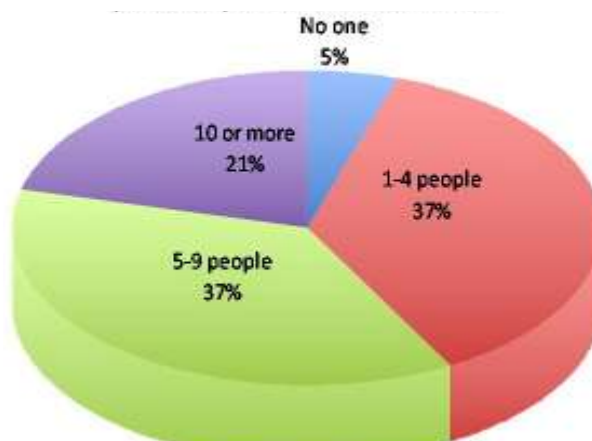
### Other Exposure to Violence

Over half (58%) saw someone get threatened with a gun during the previous 12 months, and two-thirds (66%) actually saw someone get shot or shot at. Those who witnessed gun violence were more likely than those who did not to have ever been shot or shot at (62% vs. 27%), and to attack or threaten someone with a gun (31% vs. 11%).

Nearly all respondents (95%) knew someone who was killed in the past three years. Fifty-seven percent (57%) knew five or more people killed during this time (Figure 6).

**Figure 6:**

**In the past three years, how many people do you know personally who have been killed?**



Those who knew five or more people killed during the past three years were more likely than those who did not to be male (70% vs. 60%) and/or dropouts (57% vs. 43%).

In addition to the high prevalence of knowing someone recently killed, 94% of respondents also knew someone non-shot in the past three years (35% knew 1-4 people, 31% knew 5-9 people, and 28% knew 10 or more people).

### Violence Perpetration

Over half (55%) of respondents said they got into a physical fight with someone outside their family in the previous 30 days; 17% this occurred three or more times. Those who got into a



fatally  
5-9

fight  
said

physical fight were more likely to be: male (69% vs. 62%), unemployed (73% vs. 59%), and dropouts (58% vs. 44%).

Increased frequency of fighting was associated with an increased likelihood of knowing five or more people who have been killed in the past three years, as well as with an increased likelihood of having ever been stabbed or slashed (Figure 7).

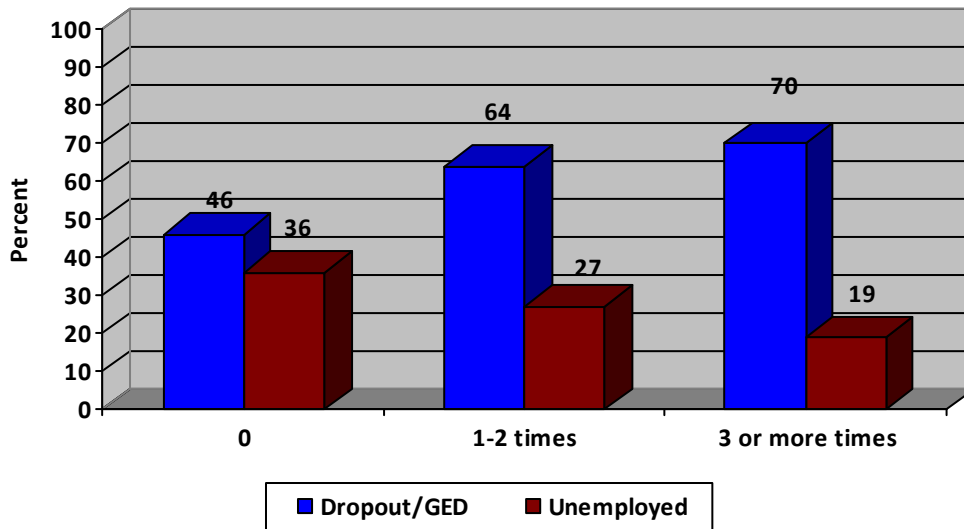
**Figure 7: "How many times have you been in a physical fight outside your family in the past 30 days?"**



One in four respondents (26%) reported attacking or threatening someone with a gun in the previous 30 days; 10% did this three or more times in the previous 30 days. Those who attacked or threatened someone with a gun were more likely than those who had not to: have been shot or shot at in their lifetime (76% vs. 46%), have seen someone get shot or shot at in the previous 12 months (82% vs. 60%), and have seen someone get threatened with a gun in the previous 12 months (75% vs. 52%).

Increased frequency of gun violence perpetration was associated with a higher likelihood of having dropped out of school and a decreased likelihood of being employed at the time of the survey (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: "How many times have you attacked or threatened someone with a gun in the past 30 days?"**



*"The family or friends [youth] live with can motivate them in the wrong way and the street or gang life may become their lifestyle. If employment was an arm's reach away or if there were more activities in the community that attracted the youth, a lot of this violence would cease. The youth would be more focused on their lives and responsibilities. When we presented the survey results at a monthly Grove Hall meeting, several local police officers commented on how surprisingly high the number of youth that reported they were in physical fights or have drawn a weapon was. One officer said 'Police officers don't even pull out their guns that often.'"*

## Safety

In terms of safety, 81% of youth reported feeling safe where they live: 43% report "always" feeling safe there, 38% "sometimes," 12% "rarely," and 7% "never" feel safe where they live. Males were more likely than females to always or sometimes feel safe where they live (84% vs. 73%). Feeling safe where you live was unrelated to education status, having children, violence victimization or perpetration. However, youth involved in the legal system were more likely



than those who always or sometimes feel safe where they live (82% vs. 75%), as were those unemployed at the time of the survey (82% vs. 77%), and those who were approached by the police once a week or more (85% vs. 76%). It is possible that high risk youth report a greater likelihood of feeling safe where they live for several reasons:

- They may be carrying a weapon or hang out with weapon carriers;
- They may only feel safe where they live, but be afraid to leave their neighborhood;
- Don't feel safe outside of your neighborhood;
- The heightened police presence in their neighborhood makes them feel safer.

*“Youth may say they feel safe maybe because they carry a weapon every day or maybe their relationships they have in the neighborhood make them feel that way. Another reason may be because the police are always in their neighborhood; some people feel safe that way.”*

# COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

**Table 8: Community Involvement**

	% Participated in an organized activity in Grove Hall (past yr)	% Spend free time in Grove Hall	% Would consider participating in an organized activity in Grove Hall	% Feel challenged to learn in school/community
<b>Total</b>	42	75	78	22
<b>Male</b>	43	77*	78	20*
<b>Female</b>	39	70	76	25
<b>16-20</b>	45*	75	79	23
<b>21-24</b>	33	74	76	21
<b>Black</b>	43	75	78	21
<b>Latino</b>	38	72	81	23
<b>Other/multi</b>	33	78	69	20
<b>At least 1 child</b>	41	79*	81	27*
<b>No children</b>	43	73	77	20
<b>Out-of-work and out-of-school</b>	53*	81*	76*	17*
<b>Employed and/or in school</b>	33	69	82	29

\*Indicates statistically significant difference. See 'Data Analysis and Report' in the Introduction for help understanding this table.

Three out of four respondents (75%) reported spending their free time in Grove Hall. Youth were asked what they do for fun; of the 466

who answered this question (46%), the 10 most popular responses are listed in Table 9.

**Table 9: The Ten Most Popular Activities**

Activity	%	Activity	%
Basketball	32	Going 'out,' unspecified	7
Music	16	Football	5
Spend time with friends/family	11	Video games	5
Dance	10	Work (i.e. no free time)	5
Sports, unspecified	8	Doing others' hair	3

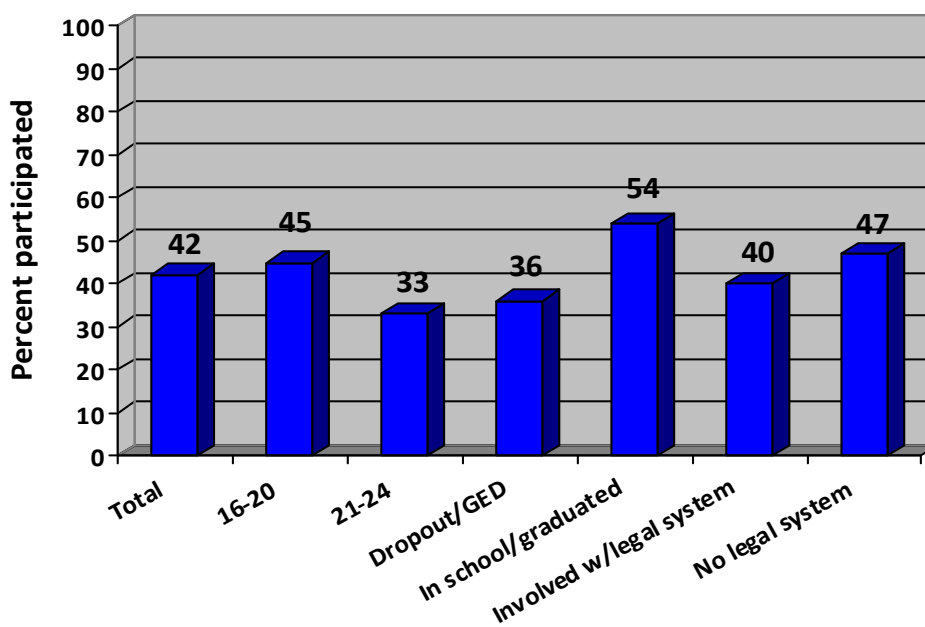
Forty-two percent (42%) of respondents indicated some connection to an activity, service, or job located in Grove Hall during the past 12 months. Table 10 shows the percentages of the whole survey sample (N=1010) who engaged in a given service, activity, or job.

**Table 10: Participation in Local Services, Activities, or Employment**

In Grove Hall	%	In Grove Hall	%
Been to the Bubble	27	Been involved with a youth program	5
Been to Friday Night at the YMCA	19	Worked for an employer	5
Played in Mike and Al's League	8	Attended a church or mosque	5
Visited a health center	8	Attended a workshop on job skills	4
Attended an outdoor event at Trotter Park	6	Performed in a talent show	4

While less than half of respondents were engaged in an activity in Grove Hall in the past year, the vast majority (78%) said they would participate in an organized activity in Grove Hall if something they were interested in were offered. Those involved in an activity in Grove Hall were more likely to be 20 or younger, more likely to still be in school or have graduated, and less likely to be involved in the legal system (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Participation in Grove Hall Activities**



*"We think the reason that the participation in Grove Hall activities is so low is due to the fact that the activities that are offered are not appealing to youth. For example, when I was growing up the only activity offered was basketball. If you had a bike, you could go riding with your friends, but other than that, there was nothing to do. Also, there weren't many youth workers or other adults trying to tell us what there was to do."*

# ADULT SUPPORT

**Table 11: Relationships with Adults**

	% Know adults who encourage them often	% Can talk to an adult in their family about their problems	% Getting help with problems/goals from an adult now	% had help with problems/goals from an adult in early teens++
<b>Total</b>	61	67	33	39
<b>Male</b>	55*	63*	28*	34*
<b>Female</b>	72	76	43	51
<b>16-20</b>	63*	68	35*	42*
<b>21-24</b>	56	64	27	34
<b>Black (ref)+</b>	61	68	32	40
<b>Latino</b>	59	65	39	37
<b>Other</b>	53	51*	23	30
<b>At least 1 child</b>	53*	58*	29*	39
<b>No children</b>	63	70	35	40
<b>Out-of-work and out-of-school</b>	46*	56*	20*	26*
<b>Employed and/or in school</b>	74	75	47	53

\*Indicates statistically significant difference. See 'Data Analysis and Report' in the Introduction for help understanding this table.

+ "Ref" stands for "referent", which means that any asterisks by a number for Latino or other/multiracial youth indicate a statistically significant difference between that group and black/African-American youth in the survey sample.

++ ages 10-15



While three out of four youth either knew an adult who encouraged them often and/or could talk to an adult in their family about their problems, only one-third were actually getting help from someone with solving their problems or reaching their goals. Males and young adults ages 21-24 were less likely to have either type of support, as were those with children and those out of work and school (Table 11). **Those who had encouragement from an adult and/or an adult confidant in their family were significantly better off across all domains than those who lacked either type of emotional support from an adult.** They were more likely to stay in school (57% vs. 29%) and be employed (39% vs. 17%), and less likely to: have any involvement with the legal system (66% vs. 89%), be approached once a week or more by the police (43% vs. 65%), witness gun violence (71% vs. 83%), be stabbed or shot at (61% vs. 81%), or perpetrate violence (51% vs. 74%). Those who had emotional support (via adult encouragement or adult confidant in their family) as well as actual help solving their problems and/or reaching their goals were significantly better off across all domains than those who had the emotional support but not the actual help.

Forty-four percent (44%) of respondents said there were people in their school or

community who motivate them to learn or try new things (38% of males vs. 54% of females). Those who knew someone who motivated them were more likely than those who did not to be involved in an organized activity in Grove Hall (54% vs. 35%), and to be younger [ages 16-20] (72% vs. 65%). They were less likely to be dropouts (35% vs. 63%) or unemployed (53% vs. 77%).

Youth were asked whether anyone was trying to help them with a variety of services (Table 12):

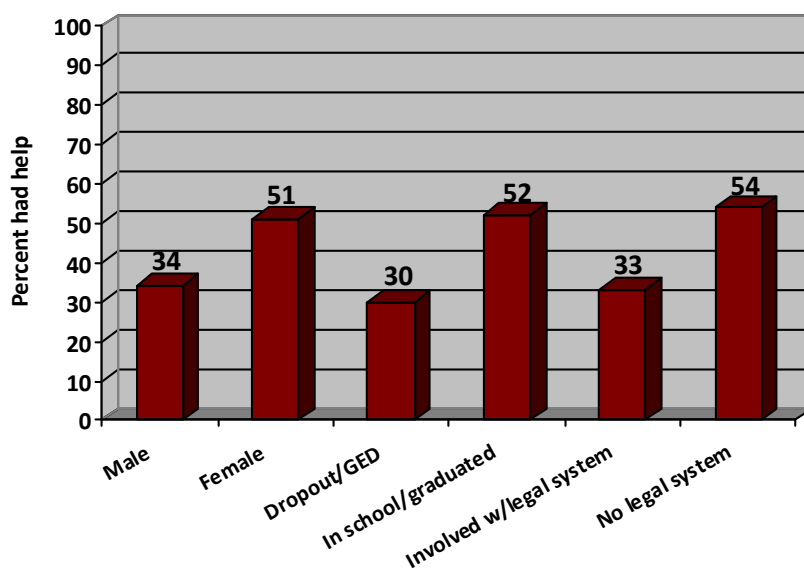
**Table 12: “Is anyone trying to help you with...?”**

Service	% Yes
Finishing school or getting a GED	27
Staying away from violence	22
Dealing with court issues or DYS	20
Finding employment	22
Getting off the streets/out of a gang	21
Pre-natal or childcare	19
Reaching your goals	28

39% of high schoolers were getting help from someone finishing school, compared to only 14% of the dropouts without a GED who said this question was applicable to them. One in five of those with kids (who said this question was applicable) were getting help with prenatal or child care. Only 14% of those unemployed at the time of the survey were getting help from someone with finding employment, and only 18% of youth with any legal involvement (who said this question was applicable) were getting help from someone to deal with any court or DYS issues. There was no clear relationship between violence exposure or perpetration and getting help to stay away from violence.

Two in five respondents (39%) said they received some sort of help from an adult with solving their problems or reaching their goals when they were in their early teens (ages 10-15). Those who did were more likely to: be female, have no history of involvement with the legal system, and be in school or have graduated high school:

**Figure 10: Adult Help When Younger**



Those currently receiving actual help with problems and goals fared better across the board than those who were not receiving help with these things, regardless of whether they had this kind of help in their early teens or not. Of the 61% who did not receive help with their problems/goals when they were younger, 23% were now receiving help with their

problems/goals. Those now receiving help (who did not have this help when they were younger) were less likely than those who were still not receiving help to have ever been shot or stabbed (62% vs. 79%), know someone who was killed in the past three years (92% vs. 97%), have dropped out of school (50% vs. 63%), and be unemployed at the time of the survey (72% vs. 80%).

*“Youth need support in finishing school, getting jobs, staying away and out of the streets, anything positive. Results show females get more support than males and it shouldn’t be that way. Most youth are getting support from other youth, but that support isn’t good support. We need adult support to guide our youth down the right paths.”*



# CONCLUSION

Data from the Grove Hall Youth Survey offer a rich picture of the experiences of youth whose perspectives are rarely captured because they are not in school, employed, or engaged with community institutions. It is important to note that the survey is not a random sample of youth in Grove Hall. Indeed, because the survey targeted young adults who were not in school and employed, the survey disproportionately captures the experiences of youth who are more likely to have dropped out of school, to have been involved with the criminal justice system, and to have experienced and perpetrated violence than youth who are employed or in school. **Results of the survey should not be generalized to Grove Hall youth in general.**

While some findings from the survey are disturbing (e.g., 95% of youth know someone who has been killed), and point to deeply troubling system-wide failures (e.g., only 39% of youth said they received help with their problems/goals from an adult when they were younger), they also provide empirical support for programs that seek to engage youth in the life of the community by providing ongoing mentorship, job opportunities (that are not dependent on having a “clean” record), educational support and community based activities that are safe, of interest to younger and older youth.

## Results of the survey suggest the following conclusions:

First, disconnected young adults are, as demonstrated by our survey administrators, able to engage constructively with other youth facing similar challenges. The project would not have been as successful if the survey administrators were not Grove Hall natives possessing relationships with many of the target participants and an intimate knowledge of how the neighborhood functions on a social level relative to youth. Their unique skill set gave them an advantage in identifying and locating disconnected youth, thus making the process easier and less intrusive for the participants. It is important to note the vital role that youth must fill alongside community based agencies, law enforcement, schools, and governmental institutions in developing any successful initiatives directed at creating solutions to the issues that we currently face in Grove Hall and throughout the City.

Second, the absence of adult support, especially at key moments, may profoundly affect the trajectory of youths’ lives. It was apparent that who received adult support had better outcomes; more were enrolled in completed high school, more were engaged in community activities and reported having had a job within the past two years. Additionally, these were less likely to be court involved and exposed to or act as perpetrators of violence on a much lower level than their counterparts. emotional and tangible support are critical for positive youth development, and youth still benefit from support as young adults even if lacked this assistance earlier on in life.

Thirdly, local service organizations need assistance closing the gap what is offered to disconnected youth and their participation in these and activities. Less than one-third of disconnected youth over age 17 participated in an activity in Grove Hall during the previous year.

Continued dialogue with disconnected youth (e.g. through focus groups) to identify barriers to participation (e.g. lack of interest, poor venue, lack of advertising in advance, other incentives needed such as food) and remove them. Comprehensive mental health services addressing the impact of trauma must be readily available in Grove Hall. Improved services and access to adult support will require a long-term reinvestment into the lives of youth and young adults of Boston. Youth are valued assets of the City and resources should reflect that value in tangible means in order to optimize the return investment that that this population can have in the efforts to create healthier and viable communities.



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# Acknowledgements

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## Steering Committee Members

Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner  
Boston Centers for Youth & Families: Robert Miller, Streetworkers  
Boston Private Industry Council: Emmanuel Allen, Kathy Hamilton  
Boston Ten Point Coalition: Emmanuel Tikili  
Health Resources in Action: Moacir Barbosa  
Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center: Deborah Azrael, Mary Vrinotis  
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**We are indebted to the Grove Hall community  
and the young people who participated in the survey.**

Photographs in this report were provided by the Boston Ten Point Coalition.

Date\_\_\_\_\_

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Gender \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Race/ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_

4. What Neighborhood are you from? 5. What neighborhood do you hang in?

6. Do you currently live in the Grove Hall neighborhood? ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Do you feel safe where you live? ☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

8. Did you attend school this past school year?

☐ Yes ☐ Yes, but dropped out/left ☐ No

If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Who do you live with?

11. Did you live with any of these people a year go?

☐ Yes ☐ No

12. Are you or have you ever been involved with:

The Courts (Juvenile, Criminal, etc.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

DYS

☐ Yes ☐ No

House of Corrections

☐ Yes ☐ No

Probation

☐ Yes ☐ No

13. Do you feel challenged to learn in your school or in your community?

☐ Yes ☐ No

14. Are there people in your school or in your community that motivate you to learn or try new things?

☐ Yes ☐ No

15. How often do police come up to you?

	Multiples times	Once or twice a week	Once a month	A few times a year
How often do police come up to you?				
At least a few times a week				
Once a month				
A few times a year				

16. What are you interested in?

17. If any of the things you are interested in were offered in Grove Hall, would you participate in them?

☐ Yes ☐ No

18. What do you do for fun?

19. Is this in Grove Hall?

☐ Yes ☐ No

**20. In the last 12 months have you:***(check all that are true)*

- ☐ Played in Mike and Al's League
- ☐ Been to the Bubble
- ☐ Been to Friday Night at the Y
- ☐ Attended an outdoor event at Trotter Park
- ☐ Been involved with a youth program in Grove Hall
- ☐ Performed in a talent show
- ☐ Worked for an employer in Grove Hall
- ☐ Attended a workshop on job skills
- ☐ Visited a health center in Grove Hall
- ☐ Attended a church or a mosque

**21. Is anyone trying to help you with:****22. Who?**

	<b>Don't Need</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	(Example: parent, teacher, pastor, counselor, program, etc.)
Finishing school or getting a GED				
Staying away from violence				
Dealing with court issues or DYS				
Finding employment/getting a job				
Getting off the streets/out of a gang				

**23. Did anyone help you with any of these issues when you were in your early teen years (10 - 15)?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

**24. How many jobs have you had in past 2 years?** \_\_\_\_\_

**25. Do you have job now (this summer)?** Yes or No **26. Did you have a job a year ago?** Yes or No

**27. Sports and entertainment are very popular, aside from these what are you interested in doing as a job?**

**28. Do you have the training necessary to do this job?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**29. Do you feel you have access to the training needed to do this job?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**30. Do you have access to legit employment that will give you the lifestyle you want?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

**31. Do you know anyone who can hire you at all? If yes, what business or organization?**

**32. Thinking about adults in your life, how much do you agree or disagree with each statement?**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
I know adults who encourage me often	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can talk to an adult in my household about my problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**33. Have you ever been shot or shot at?** \_\_\_\_\_

**34. Have you ever been stabbed or slashed?** \_\_\_\_\_

**35. In the past three years, how many people that you know personally have been killed?** \_\_\_\_\_

**36. In the past three years, how many people that you know personally have been shot?** \_\_\_\_\_

**37. In the past 12 months:**

You saw someone get threatened with a gun in order to scare them ☐ Yes ☐ No

You saw someone get shot or shot at ☐ Yes ☐ No

**38. In the past 30 days, how many times have you:**

	Never	1 – 2 times	3 or more times
Got into a physical fight with someone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attacked or threatened someone with a gun	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never, 1-2 times, 3 or more times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>